



Letter from K. Rayner to Mississippi Governor William L. Sharkey; August 21, 1865

Link to Document: http://www.susannahjural.com/cwrgm/exhibits/show/em_cit/item/83

Transcription:

Page 1:

Raleigh—No. Carolina,
Aug: 21 st—1865,
His Excellency W. L. Sharkey
Provisional Governor [&c?]
Dear Sir

Although not known to you personally—yet I have so long, and so favorebly known you by character; that I feel I need have no hesitetion in addressing you, on any question; in which the public good may be in=volved. I flatter myself that I may not be entirely unknown to you by chacter, also.

I feel the deep=est interest, in a question which I have reflected on a great deal letterly—out of which I think practical benefit may accend to the South. I mean, the obtaining payment in small part from the genl. government for slave property,—lost under the emancipation programme. This idea had no doubt presented itself, to the northern mind during the war. It seems, that Mr. Horace Greely's plan, (as lately published in the correspondence between him & Mess. Clay & Thompson) was to pay the southern people \$400.000.000 in government 5 per cent. bonds, for their slaves. We learn, on reliable authority, that of the Fortress Monroe correspondence, Mr. Lincoln said that whilst he could give no pledges yet he believed, there would be a strong disposition even among the members of the "Republican" party; to pay three or four hundred millions of dollars to the losers of slave property—provided the South would abandon the contest & make peace.

My idea is as fol=ows. First, the south must act in accord & harmony, [on?] the subject, It must be a unit.

Page 2:

Any bickering among ourselves, on the subject, would destroy all the moral power and

influence on which the movement must rely, for success. Let every state convention in the South, by ordinance or some other equally solemn and dignified procedure, appeal to the Justice, the generosity, the magnanimity, of the general government of northern people, and the Northern States; in favor of the slight compensation of, say \$400,000,000 to the losers of slave property. Or if thought best, no [^]special[^] sum need be mentioned. I doubt, whether it could be carried through Congress, in a shorter period than three or four years. But if the Southern States will all act in concert in this matter, first in the conventions to be holden this Fall, and after that, press it from year to year in their Legislatures; I feel confident, that in a few years, it would pass triumphantly. The idea itself will not startle the Northern mind, for it is one, which has been thought of, and considered, as a basis of peace during the progress of the war. The proposition would start, with every member from the South, and the members from the North, that are known to have friendly feelings for us—in its favor. Let the South press it from session to session—as the great appeal to the justice and humanity of the nation. The moral strength and power of the movement, would soon gain for it, political power. It would carry with it the entire vote of the South as so much practical capital, in a presidential election. In a few years, it would pass—and it would to some extent, save thousands [^]of our people[^] from ruin.

Page 3:

My opinion is, it should not be put forth as a demand—it should not be pressed as a claim, even; but it should be addressed to the sense of justice—of generosity—of magnanimity—of humanity—on the part of a victorious conqueror.—My decided conviction is, that we of the South must adapt ourselves to our situation—we must bow to destiny—we must try and direct, to the promotion of the public good, events, that we can not control. And we should do so, not grudgingly, but calmly and resignedly.

As to perpetuating slavery, or resurrecting it, under a different name, the idea is utopian. It never can be done. And I am equally sure that all idea of obtaining terms for gradual emancipation, is equally vain. Even if it were practicable (which I do not believe) the Federal government would not allow it to be done. Our only hope of obtaining any thing for the immense amount of property we have lost—is in the scheme I have suggested. If the south is true to herself, this scheme is practicable, I feel sure. I regret that I had not addressed you on the subject, before this. I fear your convention may have adjourned before this reaches you. If it has not, I shall to be pleased to hear, that you deem it compatible with your views of duty, and of the public good—to address a communication to the convention, advising such action in the premises, by ordinance, or otherwise, as will carry out the object aimed at.—Let Mississippi inaugurate the movement, to be followed up by the other Southern state conventions—let

Page 4:

your convention direct you (as governor [unclear],) to transmit a copy of the ordinance, to all the other provisional governors in the south, to be laid before their respective conventions.

I should be glad to lay before your Excellency, at length, the many arguments in favor of the project—and the many blessings that would result from the distribution of \$400,000,000 of capital (for it would be tantamount to that) throughout the Southern States. But in the narrow limits of a letter, I can not go into the consideration of those [striketrough][subjects][striketrough] views.

I hope, my dear sir, you will pardon the liberty, I have thus taken in addressing you on this subject. The deep interest I feel in this question, as promising some relief to our poor unfortunate suffering South—and my conviction that success is certain, of our people will be prudent, energetic, and harmonious—constitute my apology for troubling you.

I shall be much gratified to hear from you—and to learn your views on this subject. I doubt not, it may meet with ^{some} opposition from certain quarters, even here in the South; but time & discussion among the people are all that is wanting to thoroughly unite the South in its favor. The man, who may identify his name with the measure of relief will be regarded as a public benefactor.—

Yours most respectfully,
K. Rayner

Metadata:**Subject**

Freedmen.; Mississippi. Governor; Sharkey, William Lewis, 1798-1873; Slavery.; Slaves--Emancipation--United States.

Description

From the Mississippi Department of Archives and History Governor Sharkey Collection. Letter from K. Rayner in Raleigh, North Carolina, to Mississippi Governor William L. Sharkey concerning a plan to have the federal government pay Southerners for the enslaved people whose labor they lost due to emancipation.

Creator

Rayner, K.

Publisher

Mississippi Department of Archives and History. (electronic version); Mississippi Digital Library. (electronic version)

Date

1865-08-21

Contributor

Funding for this project provided by The Dale Center for Study of War and Society;
Funding for this project provided by the Watson-Brown Foundation.

Rights

NO COPYRIGHT - UNITED STATES; <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/NoC-US/1.0/>

Language

English

Identifier

mdah_776-960-01-21

Coverage

1865

Citation

Rayner, K., "Letter from K. Rayner to Mississippi Governor William L. Sharkey; August 21, 1865," *Civil War & Reconstruction Governors of Mississippi - Representative Documents*, accessed MONTH DAY, YEAR, <http://www.susannahjural.com/cwrgm/items/show/83>.

Generous funding for these documents provided by:

